

SHORT LIFE

OF

Dayananda Saraswati

BY

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A SHORT LIFE
OF
SWAMI DAYANANDA SARASWATI.

EARLY LIFE

Swami Dayananda Saraswati was born at Mera in the Khathiawar district in Guzerat, in the year 1824 of the Christian era. He belonged to the Sam Veda Brahman family of the *Udichya* class. His original name is not known. His father was a staunch *Shaiva*.

Dayananda received his education according to the procedure followed in the family. When nearly five years old, Dayananda, after learning the Devanagari alphabet got by heart several *Vaidic Mantras* and portions of the *Veda Bhashya* (commentary of the *Vedas*).

In the eighth year of his age, he was initiated as a Brahman. After his initiation Dayananda was taught grammar and portions of the *Vedas*. The education thus received by Dayananda was considered sufficient by his father, but he himself was not satisfied with it. He continued his studies.

In the early life of Dayananda, two events took place which turned his mind to a new channel, and thereby led the erring sons of *Arya Varta* to look up to the *Vedas*, from which they had estranged themselves, as Gods' Revelation to man for the attainment of *Mukti* (Salvation). We will narrate them here. When the *Shiva Chaturdashi* day approached, the father of Dayananda took him to the Shiva's temple outside the town of Mera, and ordered him to fast on that day and keep up the whole night. Dayananda did so. At midnight, on looking towards the image of Shiva, Dayananda saw some rats running over it and eating the rice which was used in the worship of that deity. Seeing this, Dayananda questioned to himself how could this be the Almighty Being who had not the power to drive away the rats? After cogitating on this subject, he gave up the worship of Shiva, and began to study the *Vedas* and the *Vedangas*, which resulted in the spread of the *Vaidic* truths throughout India. The other incident occurred about this time. The sight of the closing scenes of the earthly career of his sister and uncle, impressed upon his mind the

fleeting nature of the things of this world and led him to conclude that there was nothing valuable in this world for which a man should live and that, *Mukti* (salvation) was the only object which should be sought. From that time, Dayananda put a stop to outward religious practices and turned his attention towards salvation of his soul. He sought the advice of some *Pandits* who advised him to practice *Yoga*. Dayananda now began to slight the pleasures of this world, and sometimes expressed before his friends his disinclination to enter family life. By and by his father found out his turn of mind and he took steps to enchain him in secular affairs. At first his father wished to give him the post of *Jamadar* (*Tehsildar*), but Dayananda declined it. He then began to make arrangements for his marriage. Dayananda, on coming to know of it left the family unnoticed. He was then in the twenty first year of his age.

URNS SANNYASI.

After leaving his paternal home, Dayananda formed the acquaintance of a *Brahmachari* who initiated him, giving him the name of Shuddha Chaitanya. A great fair was to take place at Sedhapur in the month of *Kartik* (October or November), and Dayananda proceeded thither in the hope of meeting with *Sadhus* (holy men). Dayananda passed some days with great pleasure in the company of *Yogis* and *Sannyasis* but this pleasure was not to continue long. On a certain day, when Dayananda was conferring with some *Sannyasis* in a temple his father made his appearance with some sepoy. Seeing Dayananda in the garb of a *Brahmachari*, his father became so much angry that, he tore his *Gairik* cloth* and broke his *Kamandalu*†. He then placed him under the guard of sepoy. One night when the sepoy fell asleep, Dayananda fled. He at first, went to Ahmedabad and thence to Baroda. At the latter place, he had a talk with some *Sannyasis*, which led to his belief in the identity of human soul with the Supreme Spirit. Dayananda then visited Benares, and afterwards went to Chanada Kalyani on the banks of the Nerbudda. Here he was initiated as a *Sannyasi* by Purnananda Saraswati, who changed his name to Dayananda Saraswati. Dayananda then visited the Abu Hills in Rajputana and afterwards traversed the Hima-

* Colored cloth worn by Hindu recluses.

† Gourd shell used as a water vessel.

layan regions, visiting several *Sannyasis* and conversing with them on religious subjects. On coming down the hills Dayananda visited several places in Jppet India. Dayananda passed sometime at Chunar. Here he practised *Yoga* and as light food was necessary for that purpose, Dayananda lived on milk only. Leaving Chunar he proceeded to visit the source of the river Nerbudda. Whilst passing through hills and forests, Dayananda met with great hardships, his body being torn by thorny bushes. As night approached, he went to the huts of some poor men at the foot of the hills. These men supplied him with milk and attended on him the whole night. After travelling in this manner for twelve years, with the object of gaining *Para Vidya* that would lead to his salvation Dayananda went to Mathura to complete his education under the far famed sage and *savant* Virajananda.

At this time, Virajananda Swami was in the 81st year of his age. He was blind from his early days. Dayananda was then 34 or 35 years old. When Dayananda came to Virajananda, the latter, according to his usual practice requested Dayananda to commence his education anew, setting aside the books written by men. A liberal minded gentleman named Anar Lal, supplied the wants of Dayananda. Virajananda Swami taught Dayananda, in the first instance, *Panini* (grammar) and its commentary named *Mahabhasya*, and afterwards gave him instruction in the *Vedas*, *Vedantas*, *Manu smriti*, *Brahma Sutra* and the *Darsanas*. Virajananda's grasp of the subjects taught by him and his mastery over them, led Dayananda to the conviction that he was a man of vast learning, and that up to this he had not met with so able a preceptor. On the other hand, the vast intelligence displayed by Dayananda in his comprehension of the subjects, convinced Virajananda that, a pupil of so sharp an intellect had never come to him.

Besides teaching the books referred to the great preceptor pointed out to Dayananda the signs that would distinguish the sacred from the profane books. He also explained that the neglect of the sacred books of the Aryans had been the cause of India's degeneration, and the prevalence of the different systems reared up on superstition. These instructions made a vivid impression on Dayananda. And above all, the pure character of Virajananda exercised so great an influence over Dayananda that he felt himself greatly elevated.

• PREACHES AGAINST IDOLATRY

Dayananda had now a duty to perform. It was to give *Guru Dakshina* to his preceptor. The *Shastras* are not strict in this matter. The pupil is required to give whatever he can. Virajananda demanded *Dakshina* from Dayananda, but the latter said that he had nothing to give. On this the preceptor said that he did not expect what Dayananda had not the power to give. Dayananda then requested his preceptor to mention what he wanted. Then, Virajananda, with great vehemence, issued the following mandate, saying that this was what he wanted—“*Establish in Arya Varta the glory of the sacred books, nullify those that are not of divine origin, and, at all hazards, take steps towards the revival of Vedic religion in India*”

Dayananda was under the tuition of Virajananda for six or seven years. After which, he sojourned at Agra, Gwalior, Karauli and Ajmere. At these places, he extolled the Vedic religion and deprecated the Puranas and other religious books of recent times. After again seeing Virajananda Swami at Mathura and clearing up some of his doubts about religion from that great man, Dayananda repaired to Hardwar to visit the *Kumbha mela*.

On reaching that sacred place, he occupied a hut, and hoisted over it his flag with the inscription—“Discomfiture of the irreligious.” The sight of this induced several persons of different religious views to come to his cottage and argue with him. This became disagreeable to Dayananda. He thought within himself, why should he a *Sannyasi*, keep so large a number of books with him and increase the number of his enemies? Should he not pass his time in communion with his Maker? He then disposed of his books and began to pass his time in silence as a *Muni Sannyasi*. But, he could not remain long in this state. A Vaisnava came and proclaimed before him the superiority of the *Bhagavat* over the *Vedas*. On hearing this, he could not remain quiet. He argued with the Vaisnava and, it is said that he discomfited him. This incident led him to serious reflections as to what he should do. At last, he resolved to preach the Vedic religion throughout India.

Dayananda started on his mission in the year 1867 or 1868 of the Christian era, in the forty-fourth year of his age. He passed through the banks of the Ganges, visiting several places as he went. At Kampilnagar Pandit Jawa a Dutta learnt *Sandhya* and *Tarpana* from the *Swami*. Several other Brahmans also received instructions from him, and many

made a vow before him to utter *Gayatri* a thousand times a day. He then visited Kayanganj. Here Gopabandhu who afterwards wrote '*Dayananda Digbijaya Arka*,' met Dayananda and conversed with him on the subject of image-worship. It was then winter and he saw the *Swami* sitting in a garden on the banks of the Ganges, covered with straw. After this Dayananda went to Farakkabad. The news of his arrival spread throughout the town, and several persons came to him. Here he preached with earnestness against idol-worship. This roused the ire of the orthodox Brahmins who persecuted him. But, the persuasive eloquence of Dayananda exercised so great an influence over the audience that some of the orthodox Hindus even, threw away their idols and became worshippers of the Eternal Being. Among those who supported the cause of the Vedic religion, there were, a respectable gentleman named Panna Lal and some of his friends, through whose help Dayananda succeeded in establishing a *Vedic Pathshala* at Mirzapore. This was followed by the establishment of similar institutions at Kasiganj, Chaliswara and some other places. Leaving Farakkabad, Dayananda went to Ramghar. Here also he preached against idol-worship and showed the reasonableness of the Vedic religion. A plot was formed against his life, but Dayananda on being apprised of it beforehand left Ramghar and went back to Farakkabad. On arrival he found the *Vedic Pathshala* in disorder. He removed it to another place, and with the help of Lala Jagannath Prasad and a Bania named Mirbhayaram succeeded in placing it on a firm footing. After this, Dayananda proceeded to Allahabad, via Cawnpore. Here he succeeded in dissuading a gentleman, named Mahadeva Prasad, from adopting the Christian religion by convincing that gentleman of the superiority of the Vedic religion over Christianity. This spread the fame of Dayananda throughout Allahabad, but an attempt was made here also to take away his life. He escaped this time through the help of Mahadeva Prasad. Leaving Allahabad Dayananda went to Ramnagar. It was in January 1870. The Maharaja of Ramnagar (Benares) invited him to discuss with the *Pandits* of Benares on the subject of religion. Accordingly, he proceeded to Benares. A discussion took place in the course of which, the *Pandits* asked him whether the word *Pratima* could be found in the Vedas. In reply he said, quoting authority, that there was such a word, but that its meaning was, a measure. Dayananda went to Benares four times. Whenever he went thither, he requested the *Pandits* to prove

whether the Vedas sanctioned image-worship, but no one gave response to it

DAYANANDA IN BENGAL

At this time Dayananda formed a scheme for the spread of the Vedic knowledge throughout India, by the establishment of Sanskrit Schools, making Benares the centre. He proposed to teach the pupils Sanskrit literature for two years, and after that to give them instruction in the *Vedas*. In connection with this he had in view the establishment of night schools for the instruction of *Pandits* in the Vedic lore. He intended to appoint some of the pupils of Virajananda Swami to teach the pupils of these schools. The Hindoo Patriot in its issue of the 17th January 1870 supported this scheme, and recommended the *Dharma Sabha* as well as the *Brahmo Samaj* to second the laudable efforts of the new Reformer; remarking that, "a single Indian Prince might give the money required." But nothing came out of this. Dayananda left Benares for Allahabad on the 26th of January 1870.

In December 1872, Dayananda went to Calcutta. He took up his abode in the suburban garden house of Maharaja (then Raja) Jotindia Mohan Tagore at Nynan. Hearing of the arrival of a great *Pandit* and reformer, people of all classes came to him. Dayananda had a talk with Keshub Chandra on the subject of rebirth and *Adwaitabad*. He conversed also with Babu Raj Narain Bose on the subject of *Havana*. On the latter speaking of *Havana* as an idolatrous practice, Swamiji said that, *that* which was performed after invoking God and the object of which was the good of mankind, could not be a part of image-worship.

On the 9th January 1873, Dayananda was invited to the house of Babu Keshub Chandra. There, several prominent members of the *Brahmo Samaj* met him, and put to him questions touching on the Aryan *Shastras* and religion. The replies he gave pleased them very much. Specially, the lecture he delivered in Sanskrit took them by surprise. They were at a loss to understand how a *Pandit*, unacquainted with western learning, could hold such liberal views about religion and sociology, and who with the help of the *Vedas*, was bent upon effecting reforms in the religious and social practices of the Aryans. The easy and mellifluous language in which he spoke kept the audience spell-bound. On the occasion of the 43rd anniversary of the Brahmo Samaj Dayananda was invited to the house of Babu Debendra Nath Tagore. There he received a cordial reception, and con-

versed freely with some of the gentlemen present on the subject of religion. It pleased Dayananda very much to read the Sanskrit *Slokas* inscribed around the *Vedi* in the yard of the house.

Dayananda delivered some more lectures in Calcutta. One was on the subject of God and religion. This was attended to by several of the leading men of Calcutta. On the 9th of March, he delivered another lecture in Sanskrit on the Vedic doctrines at the premises of the Baranagar night school. The lecture lasted more than three hours, in the course of which he proved from the *Vedas*, the unity of God, the iniquity of caste distinction and the evils arising from early marriage. After staying a little more than three months in Calcutta, Dayananda went to Hooghly. Here he delivered a lecture in Sanskrit which was heard with rapt attention. Several *Pandits* of Bhatpara attended it. *Pandit* Tara Charan Tarkaratna, the *Pandit* of the court of the Maharaja of Benares, happened to be here at that time. At the request of several gentlemen, he carried on a discussion with Swamiji on the subject of image-worship. After this, Dayananda left Bengal, and came back to Upper India, passing through several places in Behar.

HIS WORK IN UPPER INDIA

On reaching Benares Dayananda took steps towards the establishment of a Vedic Pathshala. The residents of Benares did not help him much and he had therefore to collect subscriptions from other places. His efforts however, met with success, and a Vedic Pathshala, under the name of *Vedic Sarbabhaum Pathshala* was established.

In the year 1874 Dayananda went to Bombay. Here he made a protest against the Maharaj system of faith, and established an *Arya Samaj*. Leaving Bombay, he proceeded to Ahmedabad and thence to Rajcote and there proclaimed the triumph of the Vedic Religion. In the year 1875 Dayananda went to Puna and delivered in that place a series of lectures.

In the year 1877, Dayananda proceeded to Delhi. At that time, several potentates had assembled in that city to hear the proclamation of the Empress of India and Dayananda preached the Vedic Religion in the camp of the Maharaja of Indore. After this, he went to Lahore and delivered a series of lectures there. One of them was on Vedic revelation and another on the transmigration of souls. Here he

preached 'against idolatry. Many persons of position, including Rajas even, requested Dayananda not to preach any thing against their beliefs: but the Reformer was resolute in what he believed to be true and boldly proclaimed the same to the public. Many however, supported the cause of the Vedic Religion: and an *Arya Samaj* was established here. Leaving Lahore, Dayananda visited several other places in the Punjab, and afterwards travelled through the N.-W. Provinces and Rajputana, advocating the cause of the Vedic religion wherever he went. At Meerut, he established an *Arya Samaj* and initiated some *Vaisyas* as *dwijas*, allowing them to wear the sacred thread. *At Ajmere he delivered twelve lectures on religious and social matters, and held discussions with two Christian Missionaries whom he discomfited. Whilst working in this manner, Dayananda wrote and published several works, such as the *Veda Bhashya*, which he could not finish, the *Satyartha Prakasha*, the *Sanskaran Vidhi* and the *Arya Upadesha Ratnamala*.

Both Madame Blavatsky and Colonel Olcott greatly appreciated the work done by Dayananda. After some correspondence with Swamiji in 1880, the Theosophical Society was incorporated with the *Arya Samaj*, and the former began to issue diplomas to its members under the name of the 'Theosophical Society of the Arya Samaj of India.' But subsequent to this in the course of an interview with Swamiji Colonel Olcott came to know that the Theosophical Society differed from the *Arya Samaj* in some vital points. This led to the separation of the Theosophical Society from the *Arya Samaj*.

In the year 1880 A. D. Dayananda went to Odeypur. Here the Maharaja read the *Manu Smriti* and some other books with Swamiji. At this time, a Society was formed consisting not only of the members of the *Arya Samaj*, but others outside its pale having sympathy with Dayananda's movement. It was named the "*Paropakarni Sabha*." This *Sabha* is still in existence.

In January 1881 Dayananda Swami established a *Gorakshini Sabha* at Agra, which was followed by the establishment of an *Arya Samaj* at that place.

In March 1883 Dayananda went to Shahpur on the invitation of the Maharaja of that place, who studied some Sanskrit works with his help. Here he preached the Vedic religion. On receiving an invitation from the Maharaja of Jodhpur, Dayananda went to that place. He was cordially

received by his Highness, who gave him a large sum of money towards the furtherance of his mission. This amount was sent to the Bombay *Arya Samaj*.

HIS END.

After a stay of five months at Jochpur Swami fell sick. On hearing of it, the Maharaja sent his own doctor for his treatment. It was the general belief that the disease was the effect of poison. As the malady began to increase, it was considered advisable to send him to Mount Abu.

The Maharaja made necessary arrangements and he himself accompanied the Swami. Here Dayananda was placed under the treatment of a native doctor. His treatment produced a good effect on Swami, but the doctor was obliged to go to Ajmere at the expiry of his leave. No other medical aid being available, Dayananda had to go to Ajmere. Here the disease took a serious turn. Seeing his end approaching Dayananda sent away all the persons who were with him and began to offer prayers to the Almighty. As soon as the word "Shanti" was uttered thrice he departed from this life. This sad event took place on the 30th of October 1883 A.D., on the *Diwali* festival day. Swami was then in the fifty-ninth year of his age.

Swami Dayananda holds a high place among the great men of India. In learning in sequence, in *Brahma Vidya* (spiritual knowledge) and in asceticism it is difficult to find his equal. The service he rendered to his countrymen was invaluable. In addition to what he did for the revival of the Vedic religion and the re-establishment of the ancient system of education Swami Dayananda took other works in hand for the good of our country. He took steps towards the prevention of the slaughter of cows. He wrote a book on the subject named *Gau Karuna Nidhi* ("गौकरुणनिधि"). He also wrote a memorial, which was signed by Hindus as well as Muhammadans, in which he showed that the preservation of cows was beneficial to the British Government. He made up his mind to go with it to England with the object of submitting it, personally to Her Majesty the Empress of India, but his premature death has deprived us of the chance of seeing a great good done for our country.

Swami Dayananda also took steps towards the removal of some of our social evils, such as early marriage, hereditary caste system, and restriction of travel in foreign lands. These he wanted to accomplish on the authority of the Vedas.

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